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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALMATY 000326

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CACEN (J. MUDGE), DRL/PHD (C.  
KUCHTA-HELBLING)

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TAGS: [KZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: CHARGE MEETS WITH GALYMZHAN ZHAKIYANOV

REF: ALMATY 158

Classified By: DCM Mark Asquino, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (C) Summary: Opposition leader Galymzhan Zhakiyanov is satisfied with the conditions under which he was released, although resentful of the three-month delay in the process. He plans to stay involved in politics, but has not yet determined exactly what his role will be in the opposition. Zhakiyanov underscored the low level of political activism among the public, and identified the opposition's primary task as the creation of institutions to inform the public and help them defend their rights. Citing the lack of nationwide independent television in Kazakhstan, Zhakiyanov asked if the USG could support the creation of an independent regional satellite channel. He indicated that the opposition would hold President Nazarbayev to his promise to create a state Commission on Democratization, and would participate if the body was created with the right members and structure. End summary.

2. (SBU) On January 24, the Charge and POEC Chief met in Almaty with recently-released opposition leader Galymzhan Zhakiyanov and his wife Karlygash Zhakiyanova. During 90 minutes of lively conversation, Zhakiyanov and his wife discussed the circumstances of his release and his plans for the future.

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Released under Acceptable Conditions  
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3. (SBU) Zhakiyanov, who was released from the Shiderty settlement colony on January 14, expressed satisfaction with the legal conditions under which he was paroled. He is forbidden from holding any state positions for three years after the end of his complete seven-year term. He enjoys freedom of movement within Kazakhstan and overseas, on condition that he inform the police of his whereabouts. Zhakiyanov noted that he had already visited his hometown of Ust-Kamenogorsk without any problems.

4. (C) Nevertheless, Zhakiyanov was not pleased that his release had been delayed so long. October 2 was the earliest day he was eligible for parole, or "early conditional release" in the Kazakhstani system. The administration of the settlement colony and the local courts moved very slowly, however, with the court hearing being held only on December 14 -- i.e. after the December 4 presidential elections. Zhakiyanov claimed that at this hearing, the procurator told him personally that there would be no appeal of the settlement colony administration's recommendation to grant him parole.

5. (C) The special procurator's December 20 protest of the court's decision to release him, therefore, came as an unpleasant surprise, Zhakiyanov explained. When asked about the reasons behind the GOK's sudden shift, he said that the delay was clearly motivated by political factors, as the legal basis for the protest was extremely weak. He same hm did!nox hAfe ny\$inCqght ijto the Tivi3ion gmv(Qn#he EN+Q hAp rusu!bh8e` 'yveo`begpto"the#kknr)cdktQcvlbgucN-ZPQa)A^tw akNp`rbgMPx9`QHlv`lX&#QcQ,!an-4{ddxa"FTQO Qcu911kQoDDQqj5kd,gz7/QQ0'L,exW}?Qjf+S-EXQQ-- -----  
Views on Political Environment  
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6. (C) Shifting topics, Zhakiyanov told the Charge that he

intended to remain involved in politics. At the moment, after having been cut off from society for almost four years, he was meeting with a variety of political leaders and colleagues to get the lay of the land. He could not yet say what form his political activity would take in this "new political period" following the elections. Zhakiyanov commented that the recent presidential elections had underscored for him the low degree of political activism among the general population. He believes that prospects for further democratization depend in great deal on whether it is possible to get the public more engaged in politics. During the presidential election, Zhakiyanov said, the authorities had targeted the "weakest points" of civil society by using Soviet-era tactics of fear and intimidation to coerce people

ALMATY 00000326 002 OF 002

to vote for Nazarbayev. Saying he didn't want to get into a full analysis of all the flaws in the elections, Zhakiyanov commented that the 91% total for Nazarbayev said it all -- it was simply not credible.

17. (C) The primary task for democratic forces, according to Zhakiyanov, is now to strengthen civil society by creating institutions that inform the public and give access to objective information, and that help citizens defend their rights. He characterized this as a long-term strategic approach, not merely related to elections. Zhakiyanov underscored the need for more independent print, electronic, and television outlets that could report openly on the most urgent issues facing Kazakhstan, including the growing gap between rich and poor, the lack of competitiveness in the economy, and the enormous corruption problem.

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Independent Satellite Television Needed  
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18. (C) In response to a question from the Charge about the effectiveness of U.S. assistance, Zhakiyanov returned to the topic of independent media. He asked if it would be possible for the USG to support the establishment of a regional independent satellite channel, noting that such a channel would have a positive impact in Russia and Uzbekistan as well. Zhakiyanov noted that Kazakhstan also needed an independent printing press.

19. (SBU) With regard to other areas of U.S. assistance, Zhakiyanov named as priorities assistance to organizations that help people defend their rights, such as labor and student unions, and support for local self-government. He commented that programs such as USAID's International City Management Association project in Pavlodar, which dealt with the management of cooperative apartments, created the foundations for local self-government by helping people take personal responsibility for their immediate environment.

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Waiting for Democratization Commission  
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110. (C) Zhakiyanov noted Nazarbayev's numerous promises during the electoral campaign to create a state Commission on Democratization and to move forward with political reform. In Zhakiyanov's view, these campaign promises helped Nazarbayev receive such an overwhelming percentage of the vote. The political opposition's role is now to demand that the GOK fulfill the promises and move forward with reform, he said. Zhakiyanov stressed that in order to be effective, the body must be a state commission chaired by Nazarbayev himself. It is crucial that the commission include the opposition and be structured to permit real dialogue. Zhakiyanov expressed confidence that the opposition would participate if such a commission were created. The participation must be broad, however, not limited just to registered parties.

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Interest in State Reorganization  
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111. (SBU) Zhakiyanov asked about the impending move of the Central Asian states from EUR to SA, implying that he was concerned the shift would result in a lowering of expectations on the democracy agenda with Kazakhstan. The Charge and POEC chief explained the rationale for the move, and reassured Zhakiyanov that the USG as a whole would continue to emphasize the need for progress on political reform.

¶12. (SBU) Comment: Zhakiyanov was relaxed and self-confident during the meeting at the Charge's residence. His analysis of the current political situation in Kazakhstan was thoughtful and astute. At the same time, other than noting he was barred by the terms of his parole from holding elective office for the next 6.5 years, Zhakiyanov was non-committal on exactly what role he saw for himself in opposition politics. He nevertheless left no doubt that he has every intention of returning to the political scene. End comment.  
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